also for EOU/EPZ/EHTP/STP units would qualify for automatic route subject to above parameters.

(d) Specific reaction of Industry Federations has not been called for. However, newspaper reports indicate that the decision of the Government has been generally welcomed.

(e) FDI Policy has been liberalised to make India globally competitive as an investment destination.

ULFA's Threat to Tea Industry

1081. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether panic has gripped the Tea industry in upper Assam's Golaghat district after ULFA threats for extortion notices served on them;

(b) if so, the measures taken to ensure that garden owners do not flee resulting in low production and export; and

(c) the performance of Assam Tea estate during the current financial year?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Some reports of extortion notices by militant groups on tea executives have been received. There is no panic and the situation is well under control. Besides a tea protection force, the State Police and other security forces are providing security to the area.

(c) The tea estates located in Assam have reported a production of 403.14 mn.kgs during the period April—December, 1999.

Import-Export Growth

1082. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) What are the details about the import-export growth during the last three years and till date;

(b) What are the reasons for not increasing of balance of trade; and

(c) the steps being taken or proposed to be taken by Government to improve our balance of payment?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics data, the export-import growth and balance of trade position for the year 1996-97, 1997-98, 1998-99 and April—Jan. 1999-2000 is as under:

(US $ Million)

Year	Exports	%change	Imports	%change	Balance of trade
1996-97	33470	5.3	39132	6.7	-5662
1997-98	35006	4.6	41484	6.0	-6478
1998-99*	33641	3.7	41886	7.9	-8245
1999-2000* (Apr.—Jan)	30221	11.3	38142	9.0	-7921

*Data are provisional and subject to change; growth rates calculated are over the corresponding provisional figures of 1997-98 and 1998-99 (Apr—Jan)

(b) and (c) A favourable balance of trade which is the excess of exports over imports contributes to improved balance of payment. A number of steps have been taken to further enhance the export growth which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation, simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions.

Survey for sick industries in NER

1083. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of steps taken by Government to conduct any survey during the last five years in NER, particularly in Assam to find out the various small, medium and big industrial establishments lying in sick position;

(b) the details thereof, State-wise/district-wise; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) to (c) Data on sickness of industrial units assisted by banks in the country is compiled by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).